The Porter–Scene in *Macbeth*

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要　約

Macbeth の門番の場面

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Macbeth の門番の場面は，何世紀にもわたって論争の的となってきた。基本的に，編集者や学者そして批評家は，殺人と裏切りの最中に酔っぱらった門番が粗野で猥褻な意見を述べるこの場面を，悪趣味で不調和であると見なしてきた。*Macbeth* の初期の編集者達は，それゆえこの場面全体を他者による書き入れと判断し，これを削除したのである。しかしその後の学者達は，そこに学問的意味や上演上の都合，喜劇的息抜き，あるいは真実味の付与といった理由を見い出し，この場面を正当化しようと試みてきた。本論文ではこうした議論を検討，否定し，門番の言葉は実はこのドラマの悲劇的主題と関連しているという見解を支持する。

The Porter-Scence in *Macbeth* (II, iii) has perhaps drawn more critical attention than any other supposedly 'comic' scene in Shakespeare's tragedies. At first glance, this might seem surprising because right from the start the English Dramatic Muse had been mixing the tragic with the comic, the light-hearted with the serious without any consciousness of anomaly or inconsistency. The Mysteries and the Moralties (with the singular exception of *Everyman*) had combined the two elements. And so indeed did the plays of the University Wits, and of the subsequent English dramatists during and after the Renaissance despite their awareness of the Classical injunction that the comic and the tragic must remain pure and undiluted.

Why is it then that this particular 'comic' scene in *Macbeth* has agitated Shakespeare scholars and critics down the centuries? I think the simplest answer to this question is that such people have found the coarse levity of the drunken Porter soon after Duncan's murder, which Banquo described as the "most bloody piece of work," (II, iii, 157) not only inconsistent with the sombre mood of the play but also irrelevant. Indeed, up until the nineteenth-century the Porter-Scene was dismissed as unimportant and unnecessary, and the suspicion remained that the words in the Scene had been interpolated. Pope and Hanmer put the Porter's speeches in the margin, and Harry Rowe abridged the Scene considerably in his edition of *Macbeth* (1799) to register his own reservations about it. This line of thought received the authoritative support of Coleridge who observed: "This low porter soliloquy I believe written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent; and finding it take, he with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed just interpolated it with the sentences, 'I'll devil porter it no further' and what follows to 'bonfire.' Of the rest not one has the ever-present being of Shakespeare" (67). Even as late as 1879 W Leighton had had his reasons for his doubts about the authenticity of the Porter's speeches: ". . . blundering in respect of time; something un-Shakespearean in the porter, unusual coarseness in a play otherwise correct in such respect; and similarity with Middleton's work for these reasons combined, there is certainly cause to suspect that the latter author patched Shakespeare's play at this place, and did it unskilfully" (*New Variorum Macbeth* 145).

Such criticisms can be better understood in the light of the dramatic criticism of the times. Throughout the sixteenth-century, and also in the following century, the mingling of the comic and the tragic material had been generally frowned upon because the classical bent of mind of the English critic at that time found such a mixture incongruous and hence undesirable. Like Sir Philip Sidney earlier, George Whetstone (in his preface to *Promos and Cassandra* (1578)), objected to the practice of those dramatists who "make a Clowne companion with a Kinge" (Gregory Smith 59). And Milton when he wrote *Samson Agonistes*, perhaps the quintessentially Classical tragedy in English, sought to "vindicate Tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common Interludes." He went on to point out that such belittling of tragedy happened "through the Poet's error of intermixing comic

stuff with tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons; which by all judicious hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people" (John Milton 109). While Thomas Rymer, in his *Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678) castigated the "drolls" who made a sort of interlude in the Elizabethan tragedies, John Dryden expressed his disapproval of tragedies that were "heightened with a course of mirth" (*Essays of John Dryden* 249).

However, Shakespeare editors since the eighteenth-century found the Porter-Scene useful for various scholastic reasons. As the discussion of the dating of *Macbeth* in the *New Variorum Edition* (353 ff) shows, editors of the play like W Warburton and E Malone found the contemporary allusions in the Porter-Scene very helpful in their task. Malone believed that the references in the Porter's speeches to the farmer who hanged himself in the expectation of plenty, and to the equivocator, confirm the date that he had assigned to the play i. e. 1606. He pointed out that:

> the price of corn was then, as now, the great criterion of plenty or scarcity. That in the summer and autumn of 1606 there was a prospect of plenty of corn appears from the audit book of the College of Eton; for the price of wheat was lower than it was for thirteen years afterwards, being thirty-three shillings a quarter. In the preceding year (1605) it was two shillings a quarter, and in the subsequent year three shillings a quarter. In 1606 wheat was sold at Windsor market for fifty-eight shillings and eight pence a quarter; and in 1609 for fifty shillings. In 1606 barley and malt were considerably cheaper than in the two years subsequent.

On the other hand, W Warburton, in his edition of *Macbeth* (1747), had observed that when the Porter spoke of "an equivocator" he was referring to the Jesuits who had been condemned in the early seventeenth-century England as "the inventors of the execrable doctrine of equivocation." But other scholars have found such an allusion too general to be of much use in dating the play. It has been pointed out that this allusion and the subsequent reference to the hanging of traitors (IV, ii ,46 ff) point to the trial of Father Garnet on 28 March 1606 and his hanging on 3 May for complicity in Gunpowder Plot. Garnet had avowed the doctrine of equivocation, and was found guilty of perjury at his trial. The trial, at which King James himself was present in disguise, had aroused much public attention at the time, and any allusion to equivocation and perjury must have been immediately understood. Further, the Porter's references to drink and lechery could also be seen to have been aimed at Garnet who had been drinking to drown his sorrows, and who had been falsely accused of fornication with one Mrs Vaux.

Warburton produced one more topical reference in the Porter-Scene: when the Porter spoke of "an English tailor . . . stealing a French hose" he was, according to Warburton, alluding to the fashion of the French hose which were short and strait, and which had recently become fashionable in England. Such allusions have certainly helped scholars to establish the date of *Macbeth* (though the case for the date has been strengthened by other evidences also). In his edition of *Macbeth* (1901), A W Verity observed: "There is

practically a consensus of opinion that *Macbeth* belongs to the period 1605–1606. I am one of those who, in view of the probable references in the Porter's speech, assign its composition to 1606, and its production to the latter part of that year" (xii).

However, it hardly requires much critical discrimination to see that no amount of significance that might be attached to a particular scene for scholastic purposes can justify its presence in a play: it has to be *dramatically* relevant and meaningful. Similarly, arguments in favour of a scene on grounds of "theatrical necessity" are equally untenable. Ever since Capel pointed out in his edition of the play in 1761 that there had to be a scene in between in order to enable Macbeth to wash out physical signs of murder before he could appear again on the stage, there has been a tendency to regard the Porter –Scene as a theatrical necessity. But again, such an argument can hardly be convincing: a dramatist should always be able to make a theatrical necessity artistically convincing. The real advocate of the Porter–Scene has to prove the claim that the Porter is dramatically relevant, and that the comedy that he represents in the tragedy is part of the total plan.

It was perhaps Dr Johnson who was the first notable English critic who, despite his great veneration for Classical literature, tried to critically defend the English practice of mixing the comic with the tragic. He did so in his *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765) in which he defended his countryman against charges that he had violated this rule (as indeed some others) of dramatic composition that the Great Classical tragedians had rigorously followed, and indirectly prescribed:

> That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy can not be denied, because it includes both in its alternations of exhibition, and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life, by showing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the high and the low co–operate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation.
>
> It is objected that by this change of scenes the passions are interrupted in their progression, and that the principal event, being not advanced by a due graduation of preparatory incidents, wants at last the power to move, which constitutes the perfection of dramatic poetry. This reasoning is so specious that it is received as true even by those who in daily experience feel it to be false. The interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction cannot move so much but that the attention may be easily transferred; and though it must be allowed that pleasing melancholy be sometimes interrupted by unwelcome levity, yet let it be considered likewise that melancholy is often not

> pleasing, and that the disturbance of one man may be the relief of another; that different auditors have different habitudes; and that, upon the whole, all pleasure consists in variety. (424)

Johnson's defence on grounds of verisimilitude and variety was picked up by Professor J W Hales who claimed that "the grand ambition of Teutonic art" was "to embrace in its representations life in all its length and breadth. This art is not content with mere excerpts from life, as the phrase is. It yearns to comprehend life in its totality. It would put its arm round the whole world . . . a girdle around the entire earth" (281–282). More than fifty years later, Sen Gupta echoed similar ideas:"... comedy completes the segment of life which is the tragedy into the full circle that life is . . . a circle where sunshine and shadow, laughter and tears dwell perilously close together. In this way by making the fullness of life impinge on our absorption in the narrow, if intense, life of the tragedy, the comic admixture widens, deepens, and universalizes our experience" (202). Now, in reply to all such arguments, one may point out that they spring from an obvious confusion between life and art. Though art essentially represents life or nature, it is different from either by virtue of the fact that whereas the latter is disorderly, and often chaotic, the former is orderly and unified. The artist attempts to create an unified impression (*cf.* Aristotle) in his work as a result of which it becomes intense and meanigful. My own feeling is that a purely comic admixture in a tragedy violates this unity of impression, and therefore it is incongruous: the Classicists had a point there when they condemned the matching of "horn Pipes and funeralls" (Sir Philip Sidney n. p.). This being the case, if the Porter–Scene represents the "strain of dull broad humor" (Hudson 275), as has been claimed, it is a blemish in *Macbeth.*

The other arguments in defence of the comic scenes in tragedies are the patent ones of comic relief and comic contrast. It is often argued that after the murder of Duncan, there is a stifling atmosphere of darkness and terror, and our feelings are aroused to their highest pitch so that unless there is a temporary relief or diversion, our sensibilities would de either numbed or stupefied or roused to a wild excitement. Professor Hales, in his paper entitled 'The Porter in *Macbeth*' which was read at the Fifth Meeting of the New Shakespeare Society on May 22, 1874, argued this point as follows:

> . . . some speech of a lighter kind is necessary to relieve the surrounding horror. Now if ever in the plays of Shakespeare some relaxation is needed for the nerves strained to the utmost; if ever some respite and repose are due to prevent the high mysterious delight corrupting into morbid panic, it is in the terrible scene now before us. A monotony of horror cannot be sustained; and any disturbance of it is infinitely welcome. The sound of a fresh voice after we have listened so long to that guilty conference is a very cordial . . . (*New Variorum Macbeth* 145)

it is further maintained that after such a diversion, tragic emotions can be aroused with renewed intensity so that readers can experience heightened tragic tension later on. Hudson believed that the Porter–Scene "deepens the effect, the strange but momentary

diversion causing them to return with greater force" (277). G B Harrison also makes indenitical remarks about the effect of the Porter–Scene (197–198).

The point about 'comic relief' is not unconnected with the ideas about 'comic contrast.' As Alden points out, "Relief in the literal sense of contrast about that there is no doubt" (298). The upholders of this argument do not seem to be aware of an obvious contradiction. While the wish for 'comic relief' suggests surfeit of tragic emotions, the theory of 'comic contrast' looks forward to heightened tragic feelings. In other words, according to this line of argument, a desire for deeper tragic emotions goes with the illogical wish to escape from them.

Critically, more damaging implication of the theory of 'comic relief' is that at one stage the tragic emotions become too terrible, and hence *undesirable* so that one wants relief from them. This is perhaps a rather dangerous position to maintain because in that case the fundamental question would be: why should the dramatist create such unbearable tragic tensions in the first place? Kenneth Muir rightly remarks that "a great dramatist does not create feelings of tension and intensity to dissipate them in laughter" (xxvi). Indeed, if we recognize this, little will remain of the argument about 'tragic contrast.' A comic scene in a tragedy, instead of heightening tragic emotions, will seriously interfere with the solemnity and deeply serious atmosphere of the entire tragedy. The Clarendon editors of *Macbeth,* who viewed the Porter–Scene as purely comic, found it incongruous for this very reason: "To us the comic, not of a high degree of comedy at best, seems strangely out of place amidst the tragic horrors which surround it . . . " (*New Variorum Macbeth* 144).

An important line of defence taken by, especially the twentieth–century critics of the play, has been that this comic scene in fact has tragic overtones. Robert Speaight has pointed out that Shakespeare knows how to "give the foolery an ironic edge" (65), the implication being that for the readers who closely follow the Porter's words, his speeches cease to be comic. However, it cannot be denied that the Porter is at least *ostensibly* comic. As to why at all has Shakespeare made this scene apparently comic, various explanations have been offered. While Coleridge believed that it was written for the mob, later critics like Speaight and Alden held the opinion that Shakespeare had done so as a concession to the popular dramatic convention, and also perhaps to the demands of his company that its leading comedian should be furnished a part in the tragedy. But it is likely that though Shakespeare yielded here, as elsewhere, to some of the dramatic conventions of the time, he did not make any artistic compromise. It is also significant that as he grew maturer and more influential, he included less and less comic material in his tragedies:

> . . . of Shakespeare's tragedies the earliest contains some ten or a dozen partly comic scenes; in the others there are altogether some twenty to twenty–five—of course no two readers would agree in the count,—an average of a little less than three each. Of these scenes one in each tragedy, *Lear* excepted, partakes of the nature of the old clown interlude; in *Lear* the clown, now become a fool, is developed

> to an important and partly serious character. The other comic scenes are of various kinds. Three tragedies, *Julius Caeser, Othello* and *Macbeth,* are free from outstanding comic details except for the single interlude scene, though showing secondary moments of amusing by-play. (Alden 294)

Now, going back to the Porter-Scene, it is to be noted that the supposedly comic utterances are, in fact, rather grim. Bradley remarked that "the moment is too terrific. The Porter's remarks are not comic enough to allow one to forget for a moment what has proceeded and what must follow" (333). Before we proceed to analyse how that is so-and indeed, to demonstrate that the Porter's words are hardly comic at all-we must say a word about the knocking at the gate which, as Hales has pointed out, is "inseparably associated" (277) with the Porter-Scene. In his celebrated essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*" (1832), De Quincey said that right since his childhood, this event produced a "peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity" (1090) and went on to explain that the reason for this was that the knocking at the gate resumed normal life which in turn put in sharp contrast the unnaturally evil drama which was being enacted inside the castle:

> Hence it is that, when the deed is done,when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the reestablishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them. (1095)

Augustus Ralli saw this as an example of "the finest romantic critcism, only to be compared with that of Lamb or Coleridge . . . De Quincey was a poet who worked backward from a single haunting impression; the feeling preceded the thought; and his criticsm convinces the more because it is emotional rather than intellectual, related by metaphor to his whole experience of life" (167-168).

J W Spargo made the further point that Shakespeare, following the tradition that went back to Horace and folklore, presented the knocking as "the climax of a series of portents of death" (269). According to Spargo, there was a special significance of the knocking at the gate in London around the time the play was produced. In 1603, there occured a terrible plague in London. At that time, the searchers in their attempt to confine the spread of the epidemic removed dead bodies at the earliest opportunity. For this purpose, the searchers would knock, and sometimes thunderously pound, at the doors of the houses where all the inmates might have died of the disease. So the suggestion is that Shakespeare's audience around 1606 could be expected to react "accordingly" to the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth.* This knocking, along with other references to the omens of death, like wolf's "howl" (II, iii, 53) and the owl's shrieks (II, iii, 3) create feelings of fear and apprehension. Hales has commented on Shakespeare's ability to

create awesome effect by the simplest of means. After the bloody deed has been perpetrated, when the nerves of Macbeth have been stretched to the uttermost, when the phantom voice admonishes "Sleep no more"—at this moment, there is a knocking at the door. This has a tremendous effect on the audience, and Arthur Quiller-Couch notices "with how right an artistry Shakespeare throws all the effect of this knocking upon the souls *within*" (44). E K Chambers is also of the opinion that in this scene, Shakespeare, with his delicate workmanship, succeeds in producing the effect "of weirdness, of something uncanny" (234). Lily Campbell has demonstrated how *Macbeth* can be viewed as a study in fear: "In both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth there is seen the ambition which moves to rash deeds; in both there is seen the gradual dissolution of fear, the one being led to final self-destruction, the other to the final fury of despair" (213). She has gone on to relate the theme of fear which runs through the play to the knocking at the gate. The latter produces fear not only in Macbeth but also in Lady Macbeth. Of course, in the first instance, the knocking is merely a noise to her at the south entry (II, iii,64 - 65) which is understandable in view of her remarkable self-command and her iron-will. But when later on in the play the skies fall on her, when she suddenly breaks down, we learn how the knocking has affected her: "To bed, to bed" she exclaims as if in a daze "there is knocking at the gate: come, come, come, give me your hand" (V, ii, 63-64) .

It is after this knocking at the gate, with all its fearful implications, that the Porter enters and he says things which might seem to be coarse, bawdy and irrelevant. But it does not, or rather, should not, provoke laughter because his words are preganant with sinister implications and ironic overtones. To start with, the Porer says, "If a man were Porter of Hell Gate," to which Hales (284) replies that he is really so and quotes Bodenstedt and Gervinus in support of his contention. Bodenstedt had remarked: "After all, his uncouth comicality has a tragic background; he never dreams, while imagining himself a porter of hell-gate, of how near he comes to the truth. What are all these petty sinners who go to the everlasting bonfire, compared with those great criminals whose gates he guards!" And Gervinus had pointed out: "Yet, at all events, it is not inappropriate: there is an uncomfortable joviality which by way of contrast is very suitable to the circumstances, when the drunken warder, whom Duncan's gifts of festivities of the evening have left in a state of excitement, calls his post 'Hell-Gate' in a speech in which every allusion bears point."

It has been suggested that the Porter as the keeper of hell-gate takes one back to the early plays, especially the Mysteries. Hales says that in Virgil we have Cerebrus as a janitor and goes on to point out that it is quite understandable that one of the devils should be transformed into the figure of a hell-porter to balance St Peter at the Gate of Heaven. Further, in the York and Townley Cycles we have Ribald who is some such figure, and the Pardoner in *The Four PP* is in easy terms with "the devyll that kept the gate." If we take the Porter in *Macbeth* as belonging to the tradition of hell-gate, he himself and his words acquire grim irony. He imagines himself to be a hell-porter but soon gives up the idea because "this place is too cold for Hell" (II, iii, 19). But to the audience, the word

"cold" is meaningful in a different sense: apart from the fact that Dante speaks of the *frozen* circle of Hell, "cold" can be associated with the worst sort of evil, "cold-blooded murder" which has just taken place.

Further, the Porter's reference to 'equivocation' may be seen to be not only an allusion to a contemporary event (Father Garnet's trial) but also to the equivocations and prevarications that Macbeth takes recourse to after the murder of Duncan. His speech, immediately after the event, beginning "Had I died an hour before this chance I had lived a blessed time . . . " (II, iii, 90–96) reveals him as "the instrument of the equivocation of the fiend That lies like truth" (Muir 67). This theme of equivocation can also be related to what John B Harcourt calls the theme of "apperance and reality", (396) and what Brents Stirling describes as the theme of "contradiction," (385) in *Macbeth.*

Leaving aside all these interpretations which seek to make the Porter-Scene an integral part of the play, its relevance can be seen on a very simple level, and in a manner that would be easily accessible to both the play-goer and the reader. Speaight believes that *Macbeth* is essentially a play about nature: "The sin of Macbeth was essentially a sin against nature; against the natural loyalty of a subject to his sovereign and of a host to his guest" (54). If this is so, the Porter can be viewed (*cf.* De Quincey) as representing the natural moral order in which the greedy farmer, the equivocator and and the corrupt tailor "go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire." Againt this, the enormity of Macbeth's crime, and its fearful consequences, assume frightening proportions.

No wonder, the Porter does not make Bradley "smile: the moment is too terrific. He is grotesque; no doubt the contrast he affords is humorous as well as ghastly; I dare say the groundlings roared with laughter at his coarsest remarks. But they are not comic enough to allow one to forget for a moment what has preceded and what must follow" (333).

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